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ABSTRACT

This document consists of two closely related papers given at the same conference session: "Oral Proficiency for Managers: A Design for Portuguese" (Maria Antonia Cowles), and "Oral Proficiency for Managers: A Design for German" (Doris Kirchner). These papers discuss program design and strategies for developing oral foreign language proficiency in international business students at the University of Pennsylvania's Joseph Lauder Institute. One focuses on the strategies and techniques used for bringing students of German from the Advanced or Intermediate/High level of proficiency to the Superior level during the 2-year program. The other outlines the program design and approach to Portuguese instruction. Common features of the two programs include a summer study period in a foreign country and instructional techniques geared to the language and situational requirements of managers. (MSE)

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BUILDING ADVANCED ORAL PROFICIENCY SKILLS FOR MANAGERS

by

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ORAL PROFICIENCY FOR MANAGERS: A DESIGN FOR PORTUGUESE

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APRIL 1987

ABSTRACT - New perspectives made evident by recent studies in second language learning and teaching have led to a change in rationale in the approach, the design as well as the procedures utilized in conceptualizing and implementing a second language program. The design of the Portuguese segment of the Joseph Lauder Institute of the University of Pennsylvania reflects the influence of the developments resulting from research on the nature of language learning and on how learner, teacher, text, and context interact for maximum results.

INTRODUCTION - The development of the concept of communicative competence as it relates to language teaching can be traced to Hymes (1971) who proposed four parameters to the systems of rules that underlie communicative behavior: 1. whether (and to what extent) something is formally possible; 2. whether (and to what extent) something is feasible; 3. whether (and to what extent) something is appropriate in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated; 4. whether (and to what extent) something is in fact done, actually performed and what its doing entails. I1971:12I. Included in his concept of competence is tacit knowledge and ability for use. Hymes was concerned with the rules of speaking, "there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless." M. Canale and M. Swain (1980) proposed a theoretical framework consisting of four components of

communcative competence, as follows: grammatical competence is the mastery of the linguistic code, the ability to recognize and produce lexical, morphological, syntactical, and phonological features of a language; sociolinguistic competence deals with the social rules of language use (roles of participants, the information they share, function of the interaction); discourse competence is concerned with the connection of sentences or utterances to form a meaningful whole, cohesion and coherence), and strategic competence (strategies that are used to compensate for what is not known or remembered). The four components should be included in a model of curriculum.

The new focus has guided the designer's approach to the new task in the following ways: language is both function and form, it is interactive, it is creative, it encompasees the interaction of the four components of communicative competence defined by Canale; it is learner centered where his/her needs, intellectual involvement, individual learning styles, and strategies are taken into consideration; well defined experiences in target language environment as well as with realia are most important; and use of technology to enhance or simply supply such an experience is considered crucial; the teacher plays the role of manager of the language learning experience.

THE LAUDER MODEL - With this backgoround in mind, I will use J.Richards and T. Rodgers (1986) framework to define

our model.

a. Approach - Language is believed to be a creative process encompassing function and form and where learners' needs and individualities are an important concern. Language is also viewed as a vehicle of interpersonal relations and as an instrument of social exchange and interaction.

b. Design - We wish to consider the objectives of a method selection of language content, types of learning and teaching activities through needs analysis, roles of learners, teachers, and materials. Our program consists of three well defined segments: a first summer of eight weeks in the target country, a second summer of professional internship in the target country, and two academic years of language maintenance and enrichment in a non-target environment. The first step to be considered and thought to be extremely important in a totally new design was a thorough needs analysis which would identify the profile of these learners, what these learners need to do with the language once they have learned it (goal) and what the learners need to do to actually acquire the language (process). The needs assessment in this case included: a. questionnaire of students' background and language experience; b. interviews with professors teaching the MBA/MA content courses and examination of syllabi; c. class observation; d. interview with businessmen in target

country; e. interview with faculty teaching business programs in target country; and f. observation of discourse and interaction in target country. The results of this investigation indicated that many of our students were multi-lingual/multi-cultural, most of them were extroverts, highly motivated, good risk takers, and goal oriented. It was also found that all had had a cognate language, mostly Spanish and that proficiency level in Portuguese was zero. Learners needed speaking, listening comprehension and reading skills more than writing. Business related discourse required special attention along with the basic language program. Students should be able to comprehend and produce business related discourse, read journals and periodicals, balance sheets, financial statements, comprehend and make notes of meetings, discussions, presentations, and effectivelly participate of discussions in the business setting. Considering that the immediate goal for language proficiency to be attained at the end of the two year program is an ACTFL 3 (Superior), we proceeded with the design of the summer program.

DESIGN OF SUMMER PROGRAM IN TARGET COUNTRY -

1. Language component - designed to meet needs indicated by entry proficiency level and proficiency in related language(s). Use of text was enriched by video-tapes, live television broadcast, language laboratory, and periodicals.
2. Transfer strategies for speakers of Spanish - this is a

cognitive segment designed to develop special strategies which will help transfer from Spanish to Portuguese. Phonological, syntactical, morphological, and lexical differences and similarities are presented. Language laboratory constitutes a supplementary tool.

3. Portuguese for specific purpose - develops communicative skills in specific domains of business, finance, and economics with special emphasis on discourse features and appropriateness specific of such contexts. This segment is heavily task based.

4. Content segment - Introduction to Brazilian culture in the form of a series of mini seminars in areas identified by the needs analysis. History and Geography of Brazil.

5. A homestay experience for the full eight weeks in the target country.

6. Special visits and interviews.

c.Procedure - The last level of conceptualization and organization within a method is what we will refer to as a procedure. This encompasses the actual day to day techniques, practices, and behaviors that operate in teaching: how activities are used (drills, dialogues, information gap activities) to present language; how particular teaching activities are used for practicing language; and procedures and tecniques used for giving feedback to learners. In defining procedures we chose to be eclectic and to keep in mind the individual differences,

personality, cognitive style, motivation, proficiency in other languages, personality. Most of the material was designed to meet the variety of differences and given more or less emphasis depending on the students. For example, the lab work of the language transfer strategies was used according to cognitive style of the student; amount of overt grammar exercises depended on individual needs. The Portuguese for specific purpose segment was mostly task based, involving visits, interviews, reports, discussions and a final oral/written production. There was always an attempt to integrate all skills and to spiral sequence of form rather than keep a linear fixed sequence. Cloze exercises, role playing games, simulation exercises were interactive, authentic, purposive, and contextualized.

d. Treatment of Errors - Interlanguage is considered part of the process of language acquisition. Consequently, errors were only corrected when the session was dedicated to form (grammar).

e. Evaluation - In order to assess the route and the rate of the students' learning as well as the effectiveness of the model designed for the students, we carried out ongoing and integrative evaluations as well as an ACTFL interview at the end of the eight week summer session. The integrative tasks can be observed in the videos presented. ACTFL ratingscorrelated very well with proficiency

exhibited in presentation of integrative tasks. Student performance, student evaluation of program design and teaching staff constitute the tools for continuous reevaluation of design and procedures utilized in the Lauder Model.

Conclusion - The Lauder Model is eclectic, learner centered and designed to meet the individual needs of those learners who are in fact learning a language with a "specific purpose" in mind; that of functioning effectively in the target language both in the social and the business context.

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ORAL PROFICIENCY FOR MANAGERS

A DESIGN FOR GERMAN

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This presentation will concern itself with the strategies and techniques with which the Intermediate High/Advanced speaker of German develops Superior oral proficiency during his/her two year tenure at the Institute. The main focus of the presentation will be on the language maintenance program during the two academic years. Before doing so, the context of this program needs more specific definition. Since we are talking about advanced foreign language study within the non-traditional context of a combined MA/MBA program, it will be first necessary to analyze some of the aspects which distinguish the student body and teaching approach from that of a purely liberal arts program. A discussion of the needs and goals as well as the student profile at the Institute will enlighten the approach and design of our two year language and culture program.

Goals and Needs

Goals and needs of MA/MBA students at Lauder influence each other and are thus interlinked. The goals and needs of studying a foreign language for a student interested in launching a career in international business are necessarily different from one interested in pursuing an academic career in literature or from students interested in fulfilling departmental language requirements.

The general goals, as defined by the Lauder Institute are:

1. Superior Oral Proficiency
2. Substantial knowledge of contemporary and traditional culture of native speakers of the target language.
3. Understanding of management communication style and cultural sensitivity in a range of professional and social settings. 1

The immediate language goal for Lauder students is to reach Superior oral proficiency in order to function with the effectiveness of an educated native speaker in social as well as in different management situations. Superior proficiency in this context extends to the knowledge of German business language and business culture. This includes successfully negotiating with German business partners, proposing, accepting or denying offers in German, and to be familiar with relevant economic rules, laws and customs. Beyond this it is crucial that students develop or build upon their cultural sensitivity of the target culture. It is not sufficient to speak the target language structurally and grammatically correctly and to be able to read and write well in order to become successful business leaders. Linguistic competence, in other words, is not sufficient. While all these skills are of great significance, it is equally important to be truly familiar with customs of the foreign culture and, more specifically, business culture, in order to be

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[1] Language and Cultural Perspectives Program (Philadelphia: Lauder Institute, Spring 1987).

professionally successful and accepted by foreign partners. Thus it is communicative competence as defined by Hymes 2, including the knowledge of social rules and appropriateness which are at the core of Lauder students' needs. The lack of language competence and cultural sensitivity of American managers engaged in business abroad or with foreign partners at home and the problems arising from this have been lamented widely in the past and do not need to be elaborated upon at this time. 3 How cultural sensitivity is defined in the context of the successful manager, accepted by foreigners, will be explained in the section of this presentation which will focus on the actual German language and culture curriculum during the two years at Lauder. In leaving the discussion of goals and needs, it should be emphasized that the definition of these goals and needs is an ongoing process, incorporating individual student's experiences during their required summer internships in Germany. Based on this, we strive to achieve an accurate analysis of the linguistic and communicative needs of contemporary international managers.

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2 D. Hymes, "Competence and performance in linguistic theory," Language acquisition: models and methods, ed. R. Huxley and E. Ingram (London: Academic Press, 1971).

3 An excellent review article on this situation is: Marianne Inman, "Bilingualism in Business: Past, Present & Future," Proceedings of The Conference of the American Association of University Supervisors and Coordinators of Foreign Language Programs (AAUSC) (Columbus: Ohio State University, October 30 - November 1, 1985) 1-15.

Student Profile

A description of the type of student the Lauder Institute tries to recruit and which in turn is attracted by the Institute's program will be beneficial for understanding the operating scope, challenges, and some of the problems which arise in teaching such a group of individuals. Since an upper limit of 50 students for each year has been defined, language classes in the nine available target languages (Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, Hindi, and English for non-English speaking applicants) are optimally small from an instructional point of view. This, however, accentuates the characteristics of the student body both positively and negatively. The following observations are based on the different Lauder language classes in German since June, 1985.

The diversity of the students in respect to their educational and personal backgrounds, their work experience and cultural exposure is most striking. During the last two years, a total of fourteen Lauder students had chosen German. Their average age was 27 and their work experience ranged from 1,5 - 4 years in business and business related fields. Although pursuing a career in business and enrolled in the MA/MBA program, they were unusually broad minded in their pursuit of knowledge. Their undergraduate majors included linguistics, engineering, Romance languages, German literature, political sciences, mathematics, history, and economics. Their work experience was predominantly in the business sector, many of them had worked abroad both for

foreign and U.S. firms during part of their professional lives. Thus, out of their own experience, they are acutely conscious about the importance of an internationalized business school curriculum, which would eventually produce a new generation of culturally and linguistically sensitive internationalized managers. Many students did not apply to traditional MBA programs, therefore clearly demonstrating their preference for international business. Many of them held positions with high annual salaries prior to enrolling at the Institute. Going back to school for them meant a drastic change in life style, therefore again demonstrating a conviction for and belief in the benefits and needs of an internationalized business degree. For all these reasons, motivation to study a foreign language at the Institute is not a problem. It is more the heavy course load of a dual degree program which interferes with the students' desire to spend more time on individual course work.

It is important to be aware of these students' backgrounds, because they translate into classroom behavior and expectations. The fact, that we are dealing with more mature graduate students, who have worked for several years - most in positions that involved a high degree of responsibility, decision making and challenges, has to be taken into consideration when designing a language program for such individuals. Classroom situations have to be challenging, interactive and to have application to past or future job/life situations.

The Academic Year

The successful completion of the eight week summer program in the target country forms the basis for the continuing program during the two academic years at Penn. Students at this point have reached Advanced Plus, in rare cases Superior, oral proficiency, provided their entry level was Advanced. The language and culture program during the consecutive two years at the Institute strives to maintain and further develop students communicative competence and to achieve the earlier stated goals.

Lauder students concentrate predominantly on oral proficiency in their target language. Due to the nature of their future professional needs, it is crucial that their Superior oral proficiency extends strongly to the professional use of the target language. Curriculum development and classroom design has to center around these particular needs of the students.

The importance of linking languages with the professions is no longer a novel idea. Nevertheless there are no satisfactory teaching materials in German that would fit the required needs of business school students. Most materials on the market do not adequately address the communicative and socio-cultural needs of future international corporate leaders. An abundance of teaching materials are available on how to write business letters, resumes, inquiries. However in most cases these functions will be fulfilled by support personnel of corporate leaders. On the whole, available materials center on the national economy and industries of the target country; the international context of

increasing global markets is usually not addressed. And it is precisely this knowledge, the integration of national and international business, which is of interest to Lauder students. Many of the methods and materials employed at the Institute have therefore emerged empirically by analyzing future positions of Lauder students. Students' own suggestions and experiences during their internship in the target country in summer II at Lauder also play a vital role in the development of materials which can enhance oral proficiency. The approach in syllabus design could be described as "notional-functional".[4] The underlying principles of a notional-functional syllabus design are the following according to Szymanski:[5]

1. The syllabus stresses those uses of language essential to the individual's communicative needs
2. Objectives for each unit specify both the content and the appropriate socio-cultural circumstances of the verbal behavior
3. Consideration is given to utilizing students' knowledge of their native language in the learning process and to activating students awareness of language use within specified situations prior to insistence on correct performance

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[4] D.A. Wilkins, Notional Syllabus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) 88.

[5] Jeanette R. Szymanski, "Curricular Trends in Modern Language Communication," Practical Applications of Research in Foreign Language Teaching ed. Charles J. James (Lincolnwood: National Textbook Company, 1985) 74-75.

4. What is not stressed is absolute mastery of linguistic terms, but rather the development of communication [...].

A curriculum based on this design assures a realistic goal oriented content as the materials chosen will reflect the future communicative needs of the individuals concerned.

Among the techniques, which elicit oral response, the following three are key elements at the Lauder Institute:

1) guided group discussions and debates on required readings in literature, politics, national and international economies, and current social and cultural issues

2) frequent oral reports on assigned readings or special relevant topics

3) role-playing between students and between students and instructor.

The most effective and varied of these three elements has proven to be point 3) role-playing. Based upon the familiar situations and unfamiliar situations with a complication used in the ACTFL oral proficiency interview, we have developed similar situations in accordance with the needs of Lauder Students. Therefore situation cards used in our program prompt both speech about economic and socio-cultural issues. Topics may include negotiations between representatives of certain industries with union leaders in Germany, merger and acquisition negotiations, pro and cons for internationalization of German banks, problems surrounding US banks marketing US credit cards in Germany,

discussion between American and German personnel managers about each country's different work ethic. On the socio-cultural level situation cards address the differences in informal interaction between German and American managers, i.e. how to interrupt politely, how to make toasts, what to bring if one is invited. The oral presentation skills of students are enhanced by video-taping of their performance. Subsequent constructive criticism has proven a useful tool in delineating weaknesses and in ultimately improving formal and informal presentations.

Conclusion

The design of the language and culture program at Lauder as well as the methods employed have proven successful. Feedback from students who have graduated already and who hold positions either in the US or in Germany has helped us improve our program and is a continuous process. Only through keeping in touch with the needs of the profession can we arrive at needs oriented language instruction. The success of the method is emphasized by the fact that students interested in working in the target country and in the target language were able to obtain suitable positions.